
POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Gender Politics

"Why Are There So Few Women in the House?" by Robert A. Bernstein, in *Western Political Quarterly* (Mar. 1986), 258 Orson Spencer Hall, Univ. of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112.

Women are no likelier to win seats in the U.S. House of Representatives today than they were 20 years ago—although three times as many women now gain nominations in Democratic and Republican party primaries.

Why aren't these women getting elected?

For one thing, says Bernstein, a political scientist at Texas A&M, they are winning the wrong kind of nominations: Most female candidates are challenging House incumbents (male or female), an inherently uphill battle. (Although 38 women ran against incumbents in 1984, only one female candidate won.) Seldom do they get a shot at "open seats" in the House left vacant by deaths or retirement.

Races for such open House seats are scarce—and desirable, since they give local politicians the best chance to advance themselves. The past two decades have seen fierce competition among men for such opportunities. Women (despite their greater number in the U.S. population) are no match. Of the 19 who competed against men for party nominations in open-seat primaries from 1964 to 1970, 12 won. Yet, when 91 women ran for such open-seat nominations during 1974–80, only 21 won. The women's winning *percentage* actually dropped.

Who is the typical female House candidate? At 48, she is almost 10 years older than her average male counterpart, reports Bernstein. Her renown derives from longtime service to her party or civic groups, not from professional prominence. And her drive to succeed (for whatever reasons) is not quite as strong as that of her male competitor.

Fierce ambition can give a candidate an edge, Bernstein observes. Furthermore, the more ambitious male candidates tend not to let "principles" keep them from "performing tasks that increase the probability of getting elected."

Until women show that kind of drive, their number in the House (23 at present) is not likely to grow. A sad commentary, says the author, on the U.S. electoral system.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

More SALT

"Can the U.S. Trust the USSR?" by Miroslav Nincic, in *Scientific American* (Apr. 1986), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

In July 1983, a U.S. "Big Bird" satellite spotted a powerful new Soviet radar station under construction in central Siberia, roughly 465 miles from the Mongolian border and 1,000 miles from the Arctic Ocean.

Last year, the Reagan administration denounced the project as a violation of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. In response, the Sovi-